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SUBJECT: THAI SHIFT POLICY ON ROK PROCESSING OF NORTH  
KOREAN REFUGEES

¶1. Summary. The RTG informed the ROK Embassy on April 26 that ROK processing of North Korean refugees can no longer include a UNHCR role and the location of processing must be dispersed to other locations besides Bangkok. The RTG reaffirmed that there will be no deportations of North Koreans to North Korea and that approved North Koreans would be allowed to depart for the ROK. End summary.

¶2. ROK Embassy Political Counselor Choi informed Refcoord on April 26 that in an ROK Ambassador-Thai Immigration Commissioner meeting that day, the RTG had laid out a new policy for ROK processing of NK refugees. The major elements of the policy follow:

- There will no longer be any UNHCR involvement in processing. Any arrangements will be bilateral between the RTG and ROKG.
- Processing must occur where the refugees are first taken into Thai Immigration custody, except for Bangkok. For example, if refugees are detained in the northern province of Chiang Rai, processing must occur in Chiang Rai Immigration Detention Center (IDC) and the departures must be from that point.
- North Koreans currently undergoing processing in the Bangkok IDC will be moved to the Kanchanaburi IDC after their interview by the ROK Embassy. The capacity of the Kanchanaburi IDC is reportedly 150 persons. The refugees must depart to the ROK from that location. Kanchanaburi is about 1.5-2.0 hours by car west of Bangkok. For future cases that arrive in Bangkok, the ROK may conduct its interviews in the Bangkok IDC, but afterwards the refugees will be moved to Kanchanaburi where they will await departure.
- The maximum number of departures per week from any IDC is ¶15.

¶3. Political Counselor Choi stated that his government was reviewing this new Thai policy. He noted that if there were three or four IDCs used, it would mean possible total maximum departures per year of 2160-2880 persons. This is about two times the number of departures last year. Choi added that the Thai had reaffirmed that North Korean refugees would not be deported to North Korea and they would be allowed to depart to the ROK. Since those key principles have been respected by the Thai, Choi surmised that his government would in the end have no reason to object and would not attempt to negotiate with the RTG on this issue.

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